

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

Quarterly

# *News-Letter*

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Volume VI

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## THE CAXTON LEAF

AN ANNOUNCEMENT of the Club's forthcoming publication, *A Leaf from Caxton's Polycronicon*, was mailed to members on May 6. In it, the scope of the work was outlined, the price and approximate publication date were stated, and members were invited to place advance orders. On May 28, subscriptions to the number of 202 copies (out of 297 to be printed) had been received. The book will be ready about July 10; it is probable that the entire edition will be subscribed before that date.

The unusually large advance sale of this publication is not hard to explain, for each copy will contain an



original leaf of Caxton's printing. The opportunity to own a specimen of the work of the first English printer is naturally a tempting one to every book collector, to every lover of English literature, and to every student of printing. The opportunity is a doubly attractive one in this instance because of the unusually low price at which the book is offered. So far as the Club has been able to learn, Caxton leaves in good condition seldom sell for less than twice the amount members will be charged for this forthcoming volume. At \$15.00, the book is unquestionably a bargain.

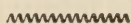
Moreover, the work will contain much of interest besides the Caxton leaf. Professor Kurtz's text tells not only the story of Caxton's life and varied activities but skilfully traces the events and trends of late 15th Century England that resulted in the establishment of his historic press at Westminster and in the succession of notable books he produced there. Edwin Grabhorn's essay on Caxton as a Printer is an uncommonly interesting discussion of the problems of equipment and materials facing the early printers and of how Caxton met them. There will also be a Bibliographical Note setting forth the pertinent facts about the *Polycronicon*, which Caxton printed in 1482, and a leaf from which will be bound in each copy.

The design and printing of the book are deserving of more than the passing word that can be given them here. The Grabhorn Press is setting the text pages in Goudy's Deepdene Text, a type that, while perfectly legible to modern readers, yet preserves the feeling of 15th Century printing and so forms a thoroughly harmonious setting for the accompanying leaf. Type, paper, binding and decoration are all being chosen with



the aim of preserving throughout the book an appropriate flavor of Caxton's times. Typographically it will be one of the most attractive of the Club's productions.

More than two-thirds of the copies of *A Leaf from Caxton's Polycronicon* have now been subscribed, and additional orders are arriving daily. Although there is every likelihood that the edition will be fully sold on or shortly after publication, the Club is pleased to point out that some ninety copies remain available as this is written. Members who have not yet ordered may, therefore, do so with the reasonable expectation of receiving their copies, provided their applications are not too long delayed.



## COAST AND VALLEY TOWNS

MEMBERS have now received four of the twelve parts of the 1938 keepsakes: views of San Francisco, Monterey, Sacramento, and Santa Barbara. The printers of the folders were, respectively, H. S. Crocker & Company, The Archetype Press, The Grabhorn Press, and Wallace Kibbee & Son.

Part Five will be distributed about June 15. It will reproduce a little-known lithograph of early Santa Cruz, drawn by Charles B. Gifford, a talented but now forgotten San Jose artist. The text, by George Tays, gives an interesting condensed account of the growth of this seacoast town from the founding of the mission and pueblo there in the late 18th Century down to 1876, the date of the accompanying lithograph. The folder has been designed and printed in his usual impeccable style by John Henry Nash.



The Santa Cruz folder will be followed about the end of June by a view of Los Angeles in the early '50s, reproduced in color from the celebrated lithograph of the town first published in the *Pacific Railroad Reports* (Washington, D. C., 1855-61). The accompanying text will be written by J. Gregg Layne, authority on Los Angeles history, and the design and printing will be attractively done by The Ward Ritchie Press.

Part Seven, dated July, will reproduce an early view of Marysville—the Kuchel & Dresel lithograph of 1856—with an historical text by Earl Ramey, author of the recently published *History of Marysville*. Johnck & Seeger, whose work is well known to Club members, will design and print the folder. Details of the remaining five parts will be announced as arrangements are completed.

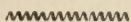
That members are pleased with this, the fifth of the Club's series of keepsakes, is indicated by the number of favorable comments that have reached the Club. It seems clear that the full set of folders, containing as they do reproductions of early lithographs of twelve California towns, each with an historical sketch by a writer qualified to deal with his subject, will prove to be an interesting and uncommonly worth while item of Californiana.

Members will recall that when the series was planned, the Club, recognizing that many would wish extra sets for gift purposes, arranged for the printing of one hundred sets in addition to the six hundred required to supply the membership. These duplicate sets were offered for sale (to members only) at \$5.00 per set. More than fifty of these have been ordered to date.

Slipcases for this current series are now on hand and



orders will be promptly filled. Members should state when ordering which style of case is wanted: all-cloth at \$2.00 or cloth with morocco back at \$3.00.



## LITHOGRAPHIC VIEWS OF SAN FRANCISCO BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH

by WARREN R. HOWELL

*Editor's Note: Because the Club's current keepsake series reproduces a variety of early lithographs of California towns, members will perhaps find a special interest in the following paper on the pictorial representations of San Francisco in pre-gold rush days. Mr. Howell's researches in the field of early California lithographs and lithographers well qualify him to write authoritatively on the subject.*

THERE ARE many lithographs of San Francisco after the gold rush: bird's-eye views of the city, of its streets, harbor, wharves, hotels, saloons, theatres, fire-houses, and the like. Many of these were published locally by lithographers who came with the gold seekers; others were produced in New York, Philadelphia, London, Paris, and elsewhere. To make even passing reference to all this material would require more space than is available here. Some idea of the amount of pictorial Californiana relating to early San Francisco may, however, be gained by viewing the permanent exhibit recently assembled in Pioneer Hall, San Francisco, by the Society of California Pioneers and the California Historical Society.

Before the year 1849, however, lithographic views of San Francisco as a village, or of the Presidio or Mission are far from numerous. So far as is known those views that were made were, with one or two exceptions, used as illustrations for books.



Perhaps the most notable of the San Francisco lithographs of pre-gold rush days are the magnificent plates in the *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde*, a large folio published in Paris in 1822. These lithographs are finely drawn and are often beautifully colored. They were made after drawings by Louis Choris, who visited the bay as an artist with the Kotzebue expedition in 1816. Club members are familiar with the San Francisco views in this series through the excellent reproductions that appeared in *A Sojourn at San Francisco Bay in 1816*, published in 1936.

Next in order of time after the Choris views are those in Alexander Forbes' *California: A History of Upper and Lower California*, published in London in 1839. The book contains two plates relating to our subject: "San Francisco Harbour, Upper California," and "Mission of San Francisco, Upper California." They were lithographed in London by Day & Haghe, "Lithrs. to the Queen," after drawings by Captain William Smyth, R. N. Captain Smyth was an officer on H. M. S. *Blossom*, which visited the California coast in 1826. The view of the harbor has three figures in the foreground, one a man on horseback, and shows a ship on the bay; the mountains in the background more closely resemble the Alps than the Marin hills. The other view depicts a peaceful scene with cows and Indians and mounted Spaniards before the Mission, with Twin Peaks, also exaggerated in size and ruggedness, looming in the background.

Seven years after the Forbes book was published appeared another now well-known work on this region, *Life in California*, written by Alfred Robinson but issued anonymously. It was published in New York in 1846.



Among its illustrations is a most interesting lithograph entitled "View of the Place of Anchorage at Yerba Buena." The plate was made by C. & W. Endicott, then a leading New York firm of lithographers, after a drawing by Frederick Henry Teschmacher, prominent early pioneer and mayor of San Francisco in the '60s. The view is from Kearny and Clay streets, looking out over the few buildings that fronted on Montgomery Street and the shoreline. Four vessels are shown in the harbor, with Goat Island and the Contra Costa hills in the background.

Walter Colton's *Deck and Port* (New York, 1850) is another book that contains a view of San Francisco when it was still a village. This is a very charming lithotint entitled "San Francisco in 1846." It shows but one ship in the bay and a group of about thirty-five houses on the cove. Yet another is Bayard Taylor's *Eldorado* (New York, 1850), the frontispiece of which is a delightful lithograph entitled "San Francisco in November, 1848," showing Yerba Buena cove and the sparsely settled hamlet at its edge. This print, made after a sketch by J. C. Ward, was lithographed by Sarony & Major, New York.

The views in these five books are fairly well known to collectors, for the works in which they appear are not exceptionally rare, and besides all of them have at one time or another been reproduced in later works.

Of far greater rarity is another contemporary print depicting San Francisco before the gold rush. This was lithographed in colors by Sarony & Major in 1849, and is after a drawing by V. Prevost. It bears the general title "San Francisco, Upper California, in 1847," and consists of two views, one from the harbor and one from



the land; also a plan of the town. The only recorded copy of this work is in the collection of Mr. George A. Pope, of San Francisco.

Undoubtedly the best known picture of San Francisco prior to the gold rush is the Vioget view, "Yerba Buena (now San Francisco) in the Spring of 1837." It was not published, however, until thirty years after the date it bears, being first issued by Britton & Rey, a celebrated local firm of lithographers, in 1867. It was later issued by George H. Baker, another well-known local lithographer, with the copyright date 1893, and with a facsimile note reading: "House of Jacob P. Leese and Tent of Capt. W. A. Richardson." Copies of both editions of this print are becoming rare.

It was Vioget who made the first survey of the town in 1839. William Heath Davis mentions him frequently in his *Seventy-Five Years in California*. In 1835 and for a few years following he was captain of a trading bark, the *Delmira*, plying between California ports and the west coast of South America. In 1838 he was employed as a civil engineer in a survey of the Sutter lands, and the following year made the Yerba Buena plan. Two years later he was conducting there a saloon and billiard hall, then about the only public "resort for captains, supercargoes, merchants and clerks of the town."

Vioget has been variously called "Jean Jacque Vioget, a Swiss," and "J. J. Vioget, the first permanent French settler in Yerba Buena." Davis lists him in an 1846 directory as "John Vioget, Maria Montero, his wife, two children, and one servant"—which indicates that he was another of the long list of "gringo" settlers who married into the families of the Spanish dons. He is described by Davis as a large man, a huge eater, and a fine



violinist. During his years as a sea captain he was jokingly referred to as "Blucher" by a friend, Captain Steel of the bark *Kent*, and Vioget was afterwards known up and down the coast by that name.

Another interesting print of San Francisco as a village is the Swasey view, published in 1884 and many times reproduced. Its title is "View of San Francisco, Formerly Yerba Buena, 1846-7, Before the Discovery of Gold." It was issued "With the compliments of the author and publisher, W. F. Swasey, Executed by the Bosqui Eng. & Print. Co., San Francisco." On the lower margin is this statement: "We the undersigned hereby certify that this picture is a faithful and accurate representation of San Francisco as it really appeared in March 1847." Below are the following signatures: J. D. Stevenson, Commanding 1st Regt. of N. Y. Vols. in the War with Mexico; Genl. M. G. Vallejo; George Hyde, first Alcalde, District of San Francisco, 1846-7. Also under the print are five lettered and thirty-five numbered references to streets, buildings and other landmarks.

As has been stated, views of the city before 1849 are few in number and in several instances quite rare. However they will always hold a particular interest to collectors of California prints because they picture the village during the quiet years immediately before the gold discovery was to focus upon it the attention of the entire civilized world.

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¶ Until June 21, the current Fifty Books of the Year Exhibition, sponsored by The American Institute of Graphic Arts, will be on display at the Library of Stanford University. A number of books by California printers are, as is usual, included among the selections for this year.



## NOTES OF PUBLICATIONS

by ALBERT M. BENDER, Chairman, Publication Committee

IN THE March quarterly the statement was made that *Mark Twain's Letter to William Bowen*, then not yet published, would probably be in greater demand than any other Club publication of the past several years. I am glad to report that events bear out that statement. The little book was published early in April. By May 28, the number of copies ordered totaled 386, leaving available only fourteen of the four hundred printed. To sell that number of copies in so short a time is surely a satisfactory showing, particularly in view of the fact that the Club's total membership is still less than six hundred. It demonstrates again that ample support will always be given a Club publication provided the text is interesting, the printing attractive, and the price reasonable. This latest publication has all three of these desirable qualities, and that is the reason I venture another prophecy: that the last copy will be sold before the next number of the News-Letter reaches members. *Mark Twain's Letter to William Bowen* has a foreword by Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, Twain's daughter; it was designed and printed by The Grabhorn Press, and sells for \$2.00, and as this is written there are remaining but fourteen copies.

The fact that this Twain item is about to go out of print is further evidence of the fact that the Club's publications of recent years seldom remain long in stock. Of the last four titles issued, only the Twain remains available. The final copies of the December publication, *An Artist in Eldorado*, were sold during the past month. This is of course a desirable state of affairs; however, it



would be pleasant to be able to keep at least a few copies of the recent titles in stock to supply newly-elected members, and perhaps a few too for those un-hurried members whose orders always seem to drop in immediately after the last copy has been sold.

Of the next publication, *A Leaf from Caxton's Polychronicon*, members are already fully informed. It will unquestionably be one of the most desirable books the Club has ever published. Elsewhere in this issue, members are urged to act promptly if they wish one of the limited number of copies still available. I heartily second that suggestion; the work will certainly not remain long in print.

Negotiations are now under way for the annual December publication. The project is an attractive one but, as the arrangements are not yet completed, I shall refrain from making further reference to it until September.



### ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

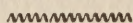
A LIST of members added to the roll since March 1, 1938, follows:

| <i>Member</i>          |                     | <i>Sponsor</i>        |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Miss Ione Bartlett     | San Francisco, Cal. | Howard J. Ransohoff   |
| Sam Behrendt           | Los Angeles, Cal.   | Edgar M. Kahn         |
| Miss Ruth Brown        | Deer Harbor, Wash.  | Mrs. Amy Requa Long   |
| Miss Carol R. Cox      | Oakland, Cal.       | Miss Edith M. Coulter |
| Dr. Egerton L. Crispin | Los Angeles, Cal.   | Jake Zeitlin          |
| James M. R. Glaser     | Chicago, Ill.       | Edwin Grabhorn        |
| Walter T. Helms        | Richmond, Cal.      | Oscar Lewis           |
| Mrs. Lionel Hockwald   | San Francisco, Cal. | Mrs. J. E. Johnson    |
| Paul J. Howard         | Los Angeles, Cal.   | Oscar Lawler          |
| Mrs. A. Jeddiss        | San Francisco, Cal. | R. S. Shainwald       |
| Mrs. J. E. Johnson     | San Francisco, Cal. | T. M. Lilienthal      |
| Lawton R. Kennedy      | San Francisco, Cal. | Harold H. Seeger      |
| John O. Kroyer         | Santa Rosa, Cal.    | John Henry Nash       |



|                     |                     |                  |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| James K. Lohead     | San Francisco, Cal. | John D. McKee    |
| J. B. McCargar      | San Francisco, Cal. | John D. McKee    |
| Donald McClure      | San Francisco, Cal. | Oscar Lewis      |
| H. D. Mortenson     | Klamath Falls, Ore. | Alfred Sutro     |
| Robert S. Odell     | Menlo Park, Cal.    | Alfred Sutro     |
| George Olmsted, Jr. | Boston, Mass.       | H. L. Zellerbach |
| N. R. Powley        | San Francisco, Cal. | Alfred Sutro     |
| Howard J. Ransohoff | San Francisco, Cal. | Edwin Grabhorn   |
| B. H. Risdon        | Oakland, Cal.       | Oscar Lewis      |
| Mrs. Hans Waine     | San Francisco, Cal. | Alfred Sutro     |
| John Whedon         | San Francisco, Cal. | Albert Sperisen  |

As the Club roll approaches the six hundred mark (it now stands at 582) the Membership Committee extends renewed thanks to the members for their fine co-operation in the matter of proposing the names of candidates. The Committee calls attention, too, to the fact that the list still contains a number of vacancies. Until these are filled, further additions to the roll will of course be warmly welcomed.



¶ In recent months three additional titles have been added to the list of out-of-print Club books. The publications no longer available are: *Prayer*, by Charles K. Field (1921); *The Gentle Cynic* (1927); and *An Artist in El Dorado*, by Daniel Wadsworth Coit (1937). Of the fifty-two publications so far issued, thirty-four are now out of print. A list of the eighteen of which copies remain will be supplied on request.

¶ The April number of the *News-Letter* of The American Institute of Graphic Arts contains an interesting little article on the activities of our Club. In it the writer, after pointing out that the Club's membership now exceeds five hundred and sixty, states: "This would seem to indicate that, proportionately, interest in books and fine printing is greater in California than in New York." This brings up a thought so revolutionary that the Club prudently refrains from commenting on it.

¶ The Club was recently delighted to receive a letter addressed, in its care, to "Adelbert von Chamisso, Esq., Author of: *A Sojourn at San Francisco Bay in 1816*." Where to forward it, however, presents something of a problem; most authorities agree that Chamisso died in 1838.